

# Chain Saw Safety

When confronted with the task of dealing with storm damaged trees on your property by yourself it is important to consider the following factors and cautions to help ensure the safe operation of powered chain saws.

## **DO NOT TOUCH TREES IN CONTACT WITH POWERLINES – EVER!**

### **Notify you local power provider immediately.**

Learning how to operate a chainsaw on storm damaged trees is dangerous and ill-advised.

Chainsaw operation while working alone is dangerous and should never be attempted.

Trees and limbs can weigh many tons and their weight distribution is not easily judged.

Downed, damaged and leaning trees are usually in tension or “sprung” and can cause unexpected collateral damage when weight is removed from them.

Never operate a chainsaw while standing on or over downed trees or branches.

Always be aware and in control of any adults and particularly any children in the area in which you are working.

Historically, more individuals are injured by chainsaws than the storm that caused the initial damage.

### **Minimum Personal Safety Equipment Required:**

- Leather Gloves, Full face shield or safety goggles
- Hearing protection and Hard Hat
- Long sleeved shirt and long pants
- Over the ankle leather boots
- Chain saw chaps
- First-aid kit
- Knowledge of chainsaw operation
- Patience

# How to Manage Storm Damaged Trees

When confronted with storm damaged trees about your home or property the initial reaction might be to find someone – anyone – who can deal with your problem immediately or to attempt to tackle the job yourself. While this is a natural reaction it can lead to the hiring of companies or individuals ill prepared or inexperienced in accomplishing the required tasks or for the “do-it-yourselfer”, serious injury. This can also lead to needless additional property damage, and significant liability. Many of these problems can be avoided by following a few simple guidelines:

## **Contracting for Storm Damage Tree Removal**

**Do** not do anything, outside of providing for personal safety of course, until you contact your insurance company. They may have contractors they require you to use or procedures you need to follow to receive full coverage.

**Be** very wary of hiring anyone walking the neighborhood and knocking on doors. Don’t be bullied into having work done through fear or intimidation. This is not a tactic of a professional tree worker and should you feel threatened by these individuals call your local police.

**Be** clear in your mind and record in writing what you want the job to look like when it is finished, particularly with regard to clean up. Be clear who is responsible for:

- possible further damage to lawn, shrubs and landscape, structures, adjacent and previously undamaged trees, fences, driveways, patios, and sidewalks,
- chip spreading or removal and debris handling (don’t allow pine chips to re-main on site - they could attract Pine beetles).

## Contracting for Storm Damaged Tree Removal (cont.)

Secure as many bids as possible – at least three, looking for those who specialize in storm damage - making sure the contractor understands the requirements of the job and responsibility for any additional damage. Check at least three references. Be wary of out of state contractors.

Get written estimates. Ensure that estimates include credentials, written scope of work to be performed, and all costs. Compare quotes on the basis of services to be performed and costs for each service.

Ask for proof of workers compensation and personal and property damage insurance. Always contact the contractors insurance company. Make sure a policy is in force when they show up on the job.

Never pay any money until the job is finished.

Require a written contract. NO EXCEPTIONS Read contracts carefully before signing. Place any additional requirements in the written contract and verify that the contract details when work will be started and completed. Demand that work only start once a is signed by both parties.

## When Do I Need an Arborist ?

An International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist can be invaluable when trying to determine which storm damaged trees are still sound, healthy, and can remain in the landscape. These individuals are knowledgeable about insect and disease, pruning, lightning and storm damage, mechanical wound care, long term tree care and tree removal. They can help you make an informed, considered decision about the long term viability of your trees. They can also suggest and properly plant replacement trees.

A Certified Arborist can be located through the Yellow Pages, internet (ISA-arbor.com), local government, and local GFC representative or UGA Extension Agent.

## “Do it yourself” Storm Debris Removal

As a homeowner you may feel the overwhelming need to quickly “clean up” the storm debris left behind by thunderstorms, tornados, or hurricanes so that life can begin to return to normal. Unfortunately, as the clean up begins, many homeowners are ill prepared to cope with the sheer volume of downed trees, power lines, branches, and the general debris left in the storm’s wake.

However, a little planning, preparation, and patience will help ease the clean up effort particularly if you follow these tips:

## DO NOT TOUCH TREES IN CONTACT WITH POWERLINES – EVER!

Tree trunks and large limbs can be very heavy and their movement should not be attempted by one person - get help.

Do not attempt to remove leaning trees or large branches from roofs. Improper movement could cause additional structural damage.

Be very careful when moving downed trees and branches laying over one another. They can be sprung or supporting the weight of other downed material which could move, sometimes violently, when released.

Pile debris where it won’t restrict your movements, the movements of tree crews or your neighbors or access to other debris to be removed. Keep trash bags and heavy cord handy

Know how your local government will deal with debris cleanup. Should you place debris by the curb and in what length or size bundle? How soon will they “pickup” and how often? How much will they take?

Determine what part of the debris may be recyclable - most woody debris is compostable - and pile it separately.

Have patience. Storm debris clean up can take weeks or even months to complete.

For more information: [GaTrees.org](http://GaTrees.org) or 1-800-GA-TREES

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